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The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Effective Leadership: Exploring the Perspectives of
Licensed Clinical Social Worker Leaders

by

Shannon Perry, B.A.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University
St. Paul, Minnesota
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership has been found to be related to emotional intelligence. There has been limited research on emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in the field of social work. This study sought to explore the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within a social service organization. Seven individual interviews were held with LICSW social workers that were leaders of an organization for at least one year. The major themes that emerged were: mentoring is an important component to being an effective leader, personality can impact transformational leadership behavior, transformational leadership can be learned, emotional intelligence means tuning into staff, and relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment. Implications for social work and recommendations for future research are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	3
Transformational Leadership	3
Personality and Transformational Leadership	3
Dimensions of Transformational Leadership.....	5
Transactional Leadership	6
Full-range Model of Leadership	7
Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership.....	8
Emotional Intelligence and Temperament	9
Social Work Leaders and the Importance of Emotional Intelligence	10
Empathy	10
Summary	11
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	12
METHODOLOGY	14
Research design	14
Sample.....	14
Data Collection	14
Instrument	15
Data analysis	15
Protection of human subjects	16
FINDINGS	17
Sample.....	17
Themes	17
Mentoring is an important component to being an effective leader.	17
Personality can impact transformational leadership behavior.	19
Transformational leadership can be learned.	22
Emotional intelligence means tuning into staff.	25
Relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment.	26

DISCUSSION	29
Themes	29
Mentoring is an important component to being an effective leader	29
Personality can impact transformational leadership behavior	29
Transformational leadership can be learned	30
Emotional intelligence means tuning into staff	31
Relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment	31
Strengths and Limitations	32
Suggestions for future research.....	33
Implications for social work	34
CONCLUSION.....	35
REFERENCES	36
APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	42
APPENDIX B - CONSENT FORM.....	43

INTRODUCTION

A popular definition of leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). Leadership's main function is to produce movement and constructive or adaptive change by establishing direction through visioning, aligning people, motivating, and inspiring (Kotter, 1990). To be a competent leader, you must have an honest understanding of who you are, what you know, and what you can do (Northouse, 2007).

Goleman (1995) suggested that the best predictor of who eventually emerges as a leader is based on emotional intelligence, which is demonstrated by self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. For example, Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as the compartment of social intelligence that encompasses the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Emotional intelligence is an important competency for a leader to master, because it can enhance subordinates' thoughts and attention to tasks (Wenzlaff & LePage, 2000). Moreover, the accurate recognition of the emotions of others is crucial to a leader's capability to inspire and build relationships (Carney & Harrigan, 2003).

Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Daus (2002) argued that the components of emotional intelligence are highly consistent with a type of leadership called transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are able to meet the emotional needs of each employee and show empathy to followers because they understand how others feel (Bass, 1990). In addition, transformational leaders believe that they can influence their environment, and are self-motivated to do so (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

Emotional intelligence is an important attribute in clinical social work leadership roles, because they are transactional in practice (Morrison, 2007). In the transactional leadership model, leaders are negotiating agents who conciliate and sometimes compromise to obtain greater decision-making power within the group; they achieve this goal by performing a series of actions that enable them to influence and convince the followers, who are capable of providing valuable support (Ruggieri et al., 2013). Understanding and handling one's own and others' emotions is a critical aspect at every stage of a clinical social worker's task: engagement, assessment, observation, decision making, planning and intervention (Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, mastering emotional intelligence is essential for clinical social work managers who desire to achieve success in their leadership role.

However, research exploring the definition of emotional intelligence as it relates to clinical social work leadership is scant. Furthermore, the literature is also limited regarding how emotional intelligence impacts the success of social work organizations. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how clinical social work leaders define emotional intelligence, and how they believe emotional intelligence impacts effective leadership within the context of a social service agency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership

The personal characteristics and behaviors of leaders are an important aspect of the working context, and can influence subordinates' attitudes, behavior, and beliefs about their jobs (Bono & Judge, 2003; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Research (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993) suggests that leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors can use verbal persuasion and clear communication, in accordance with the values of the organization's mission, to influence how employees judge a work environment. A study conducted by Li and Hung (2009) explained how employees experienced and perceived their leaders' transformational behavior, as influencing the quality of leader-member relationships (LMR) and coworker relationships (CWR). Results indicated, "Transformational leaders increase the likelihood of enhancing followers' task performance and of followers engaging in OCB through the formation of leader-member and coworker relationships" (pp. 1137-1138). In addition, they found that "transformational leadership had a stronger influence on leader member relationships than on coworker relationships" (p. 1138). Li & Hung further stated that "individualized consideration was the most significant factor influencing leader member relationships, followed by intellectual stimulation and idealized influence...It appeared that transformational leadership can effect only coworker relationships through the dimensions of individualized consideration and inspirational motivation"(p. 1138).

Personality and Transformational Leadership

Personality and its influence on transformational leadership has become a popular source of research interest (Bass, 1998; House & Howell, 1992). Research conducted by Judge and Bono (2000) examined what they identified as the influence of the Big Five Personality traits

(openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) on transformational leadership. *Openness to experience* is defined as an appreciation for culture and intellect (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Openness to experience also represents individuals' tendencies to be creative, introspective, imaginative, resourceful, and insightful (John & Srivastava, 1999). Individuals strongly exhibit this trait are emotionally responsive and intellectually curious (McCrae, 1996). They tend to have flexible attitudes and engage in divergent thinking (McCrae, 1994). *Conscientiousness* defines individuals who have a strong sense of direction and work hard to achieve goals (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They are also cautious, deliberate, self-disciplined, and tend to be neat and well organized (Costa & McCrae, 1992). *Extraversion* describes individuals that are assertive, active, talkative, upbeat, energetic, and optimistic (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They seek excitement and social attention (Bono & Judge, 2004). Watson and Clark (1997) suggested that positive emotionality is at the core of extraversion; extraverts experience and express positive emotions. *Agreeableness* represents the tendency to be cooperative, trusting, gentle, and kind (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997). Individuals high are highly agreeable value affiliation and avoid conflict (Graziano, Jensen-Cambell, & Hair, 1996). They are modest, altruistic, and trustworthy (Costa and McCrae, 1992). *Neuroticism* is defined by individuals who tend to view the world through a negative lens (Costa & McCrae, 1992). According to Costa and McCrae (1992), at the core of neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative affects, such as fear, sadness, guilt, and anger. Individuals who score high on the neuroticism trait tend to experience emotional distress, whereas those who score low on the trait are calm, even tempered, and relaxed (Costa & McCrae, 1992), Judge and Bono (2000) found that among the Big Five Personality traits, agreeableness emerged as the most consistent and strongest predictor of transformational leadership. In addition, agreeableness was strongly

related to charisma (Judge & Bono, 2000). Research (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert & Mount 1998) also indicated that agreeableness is the most predictive of quality team interaction and performance. In addition, research (Judge & Bono, 2000) suggests that extraversion and openness to experience emerged as significant correlates of transformational leadership.

Significantly, Avolio (1999) opined that life experiences play a role in the development of transformational leadership. Furthermore, research (Barling, Weber, And Kelloway, 1996) suggested that transformational leadership behavior can be learned. In that connection, Barling, Weber and Kelloway (1996) found that subordinates of managers that received transformational leadership training perceived their managers higher on intellectual stimulation, charisma, and individual consideration than subordinates of managers that did not receive transformational leadership training.

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is comprised of four dimensions. According to Bass (1997), the first is “idealized influence” (p. 133), which refers to leaders who act as strong role models for followers, take risks, are deeply trusted and respected, and show concern for their followers’ needs. The second dimension is “inspirational motivation behavior” (p. 133), which refers to leaders who provide meaning and challenge, communicate high expectations, inspire, and paint an optimistic future to followers. The third dimension is “intellectual stimulation behavior” (p. 133), referring to leaders that encourage followers to think innovatively. They encourage followers to question assumptions and approach old situations with new methods and perspective. The last dimension is “individualized consideration behavior” (p. 133), and it consists of leaders who pay attention to follower’s needs and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

Transformational leadership occurs when individuals engage with each other in such a way that the leader and follower raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Bass, 1985). The role of transformational leadership in increasing employees' organizational commitment can be regarded as a motivational process (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Transformational leaders provide constructive feedback, encourage followers to think creatively about complex problems, and build commitment to the organization's mission, objectives, and strategies (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Yukl, 1989). In the final analysis, research (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Bono & Judge, 2003) suggested that transformational leadership is positively associated with organizational commitment in a variety of organizational settings and cultures.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership occurs when a leader exchanges something of economic, political, or psychological value with a follower; these exchanges are based on the leader identifying performance requirements and clarifying the conditions under which rewards are available for meeting these requirements (Whittington, Coker, Goodwin, Ickes & Murray, 2009). Moreover, the goal is to enter into a mutually beneficial exchange, but not necessarily to develop an enduring relationship. Therefore, although a leadership act transpires, it is not one that binds the leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose (Whittington et al., 2009).

Bass's (1985) conception of transactional leadership emphasizes two factors: contingent reward and management-by-exception. For example, "contingent reward" (p. 121) refers to the efforts made by the leader to clarify expectations so that followers will understand what they need to do in order to receive rewards. "Management-by-exception" (p. 135) is a less active

approach to leadership that informs followers of job expectations, but resists further involvement with the follower unless the follower's actual performance varies significantly from those expectations.

Full-range Model of Leadership

According to Avolio (1999), the framework of full-range model of leadership proposed that effective leaders engage in a full range of behaviors that encompass elements of both transactional and transformational leadership, with transactional leadership as the basis for the succeeding development of transformational leadership. Moreover, leaders who lack a foundation of transactional leadership are often likely to leave their employees' role expectations unclear, which results in an ill-defined sense of direction and ambiguous task assignments. Nevertheless, when these role expectations have been appropriately clarified, through the use of transactional leadership behaviors, more mature relationships between a leader and their followers can evolve over time. Therefore, the clarification of role expectations provides a crucial basis for building a more general framework of mutual expectations between the leader and the follower. In other words, when leaders honor their transactional arrangements with their followers, trust begins to develop, creating the foundation for a sustained relationship that enables the effective utilization of the full range of leadership behaviors.

Burns (1978) viewed transactional leadership as an important dimension of leadership that benefits both the followers and the organization. Bass (1985) and Wofford and Goodwin (1994) proposed that transactional leadership is actually the foundation for transformational leadership. Overall, Bono and Judge (2004) found that linking personality with ratings by co-workers of transformational and transactional leadership behaviors were weak. It may be that

transformational and transactional leadership behaviors are more malleable, more transient, and less trait-like than one might otherwise believe (Bono & Judge, 2004).

Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership

Mayer and Salovey (1997) conceptualized emotional intelligence (EI) as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 10). “Perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion” (p.10) is defined as the accuracy with which individuals can identify emotions and emotional content. “Emotional facilitation of thinking” (p.12) concerns emotion acting on intelligence; emotional events assist intellectual processing. “Understanding and analyzing emotions; employing emotional knowledge” (p.13) refers to labeling emotions and perceiving relationships among those labels. “Reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p.14) concerns the conscious regulation of emotions to enhance emotional and intellectual growth.

One leadership theory (Whitehead, 1992), espoused that emotional and social intelligence are important characteristics for leaders and managers to possess, because cognitive and behavioral complexity and flexibility are key characteristics of competent leaders. George (2000) explained how emotions play a central role in the leadership process, identifying five essential elements for leadership effectiveness: developing collective goals and objectives, instilling a sense of appreciation and importance of work in others, generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation, and trust, encouraging flexibility in decision making and change, and establishing and maintaining a meaningful identity for the organization. Furthermore, George believed that each of these elements involves emotional aspects, whereby

leaders instill emotion in employees for potential enhancement of employee emotional intelligence. Leaders may influence this emotional intelligence or change in behavior on behalf of employees through the process of role modeling (Gruys, Stewart, Goodstein, Bing & Wicks, 2008). In addition, Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) found that people are more likely to engage in behaviors if a viable opportunity exists from which they can benefit.

George (2000) argued that the ability of a leader to recognize his own or his followers' emotions or moods plays an important role in the process of leadership. In addition, Goleman (1995) suggested that the best predictor of who eventually emerges as a leader is based on emotional intelligence (EI). Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Daus (2002) argued that the components of emotional intelligence are highly consistent with transformational leadership behavior. The accurate recognition of the emotions of others is critical to a leader's capability to inspire and build relationships (Carney & Harrigan, 2003). Since transformational leaders understand how others feel, they are able to meet the emotional needs of each employee and show empathy to followers (Bass, 1990). In addition, transformational leaders believe that they can influence their environment, and are self-motivated to do so (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). In this way, emotional intelligence is an important competency for leaders, because it can enhance subordinates' thoughts and attention to tasks (Wenzlaff & LePage, 2000).

Emotional Intelligence and Temperament

Research (Sy, Cote, & Saavedra, 2005; Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, van Knippenberg & Damen, 2009) found that a leader's positive moods enhance team performance. To illustrate, Chi et al., 2011 (2011) suggested that team leaders who experience positive moods are more likely to influence the positive affective tone of their teams through emotional contagion. This,

in turn, according to Chi, enhances team performance through motivational, attitudinal, and behavioral team processes.

Social Work Leaders and the Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Social work practice, according to Howe (2009), often occurs within a context of heightened emotion due to a range of circumstances. For example, Howe suggested that the role of emotions play in social work practice is a two-way process; social workers need to engage within the emotional context of the service user, while also recognizing the impact this may have on themselves and their practice. Therefore, “emotions define the social work relationship” (p. 1).

Empathy

The concept of empathy is not new in social work literature, and it is believed to be a core element of communication skills (Trevithick, 2005). Cadman and Brewer (2001) identified empathy as the key element of emotional intelligence that nurses should incorporate into their practice and make links between empathetic practice and positive outcomes for patients. Morrison (2008) examined the relationship that emotional intelligence had on self-reported preferred approaches to dealing with conflict within the nursing profession; which found that respondents who had scored highly on an emotional intelligence test tended to engage in collaborative approaches to conflict resolution with patients.

Morrison (2007) noted that the success of assessment and intervention processes relied on an awareness and management of emotions at all stages in casework practice. This confirms the notion that emotional intelligence requires a degree of self-knowledge, and attunement with service users (Goleman, 1995). According to Morrison, attunement refers to the ability to

respond to actions and feelings that requires a social worker to understand the emotional context of an interaction, and to be able to transmit this within the relationship.

Summary

In sum, the literature suggested that transformational and transactional leadership styles can enhance the effectiveness of leaders, which can lead to enhanced relationships between leaders and their subordinates. Moreover, emotional intelligence and temperament play a significant part in whether or not leader will be able to perform proficiently as either a transformational or transactional leader. In the final analysis, it appears that in clinical social work practice, the ability to show empathy will assist social workers to be effective, emotionally intelligent leaders, no matter which leadership style (transformational or transactional) he or she embraces. To better understand the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within a social service organization, the proposed research question is: How is emotional intelligence defined from the viewpoint of Licensed Clinical Social workers, and how does it play a role in leading an organization in the context of social work?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework used in this research study is person-in-environment. Social work, whether viewed as one profession or as a group of professions, has a longstanding commitment to the alleviation of suffering through intervention with human beings in the context of their environments (Simmons, 2012). The person-in-environment perspective is based on the notion that an individual and his or her behavior cannot be understood adequately without consideration of the various aspects of that individual's environment - social, political, familial, temporal, spiritual, economic, and physical (Kondrat, 2011). Person-in-environment was chosen because social work leadership is influenced by the environment it serves in.

Person-in-environment begins from a position that recognizes the interdependence of phenomena in affecting, changing and sustaining human life (Green & McDermott, 2010). Such phenomena are conceptualized as if they occur and operate on different 'levels'; *micro*, *mezzo*, and *macro*. Furthermore, these levels attempt to categorize and account for the complexity within which social and human life exists and contributes (Green & McDermott, 2010).

The *micro* level is the immediate surroundings and systems in which an individual develops (Forte, 2007). Examples of the micro level in this study are the leaders and the subordinates. They are each their own individual system.

The *mezzo* level comprises the relationship between two or more settings and systems and the impact on the individual (Forte, 2007). This study seeks to understand the relationship between the leader and the subordinates, given the social service organization. The social service organization was the mezzo level within this study. The emotional intelligence of the leader may have an impact and influence on their subordinates within the mezzo (social service organization) context.

The macro level encompasses the broad patterns of the society in which a person is developing (Forte, 2007). Within the context of this study, the macro level would include the rules and regulations that the social service organization operates within. In most social service agencies, governing bodies will regulate how they run their organization under distinct policies, procedures, and rules.

The person-in-environment theory will be applied as a framework for the questions asked of participants. The questions will explore licensed clinical social workers which is the micro level. The questions asked will explore their thoughts on the meaning of emotional intelligence. The questions will be within the context of their social service organization, which is the mezzo level. Lastly, the participants will be asked to reflect on the influence emotional intelligence has on effective leadership, considering the impact governing bodies have on rules and regulations of the social service organization. The governing bodies represent the macro level.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The qualitative method was used for this research study. This method was used due to its exploratory nature. It allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perceptions about the significance of emotional intelligence in social work leadership.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Participants were contacted by phone or email with the guidelines of the research study. Three criteria were needed to be met to participate in the study. Participants must be licensed independent clinical social workers (LICSWs), they must have served in a leadership capacity within an organization for at least one year, and they must work within the twin cities metropolitan area in Minnesota. Seven individuals who met this criteria were selected to participate in the sample.

Data Collection

Seven potential subjects were identified to participate. Potential subjects were contacted by email or phone; introducing the researcher, explaining how the researcher identified them as potential participants, described the nature of the research study and protocol, and invited them to participate. Participants who expressed interest in participating received the consent form, and the qualitative questions for their review prior to making a decision to participate. The researcher scheduled an interview with interested participants. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and were conducted at the participants' work sites. The only individuals in the room during the interview were the researcher and the respondent. Data was collected through verbal responses to qualitative interview questions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the

researcher's computer. Field notes were made during the interview regarding data that was relevant to the research process but was not recorded through the qualitative interview.

Instrument

The research instrument in this study was an interview to obtain qualitative data from the respondents. The questions were derived from previous research. In addition, the questions addressed the micro, mezzo, and macro systems in the person-in-environment model.

Six open-ended questions were asked to address the use of different forms of leadership within a social service organization, how rules and regulations of the social service organization impact leadership, if effective leadership is due to certain personality characteristics or transformational leadership training, the meaning of emotional intelligence and its impact on their leadership style, subordinates, and employee level of organizational commitment, and how they think emotional intelligence impacts effective leadership within social service organizations. Please see Appendix A for the complete list of questions. Follow up questions were asked based on the respondents' answers throughout the interview. The questions have validity because they were based on previous research from the literature review and pertain to the research question: How is emotional intelligence defined from the viewpoint of Licensed Clinical Social workers, and how does it play a role in leading an organization in the context of social work? The qualitative questions were also reviewed by the research committee to improve validity and reduce researcher bias.

Data analysis

The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher. A qualitative coding strategy called grounded theory was used to analyze the data. Grounded theory involves constant comparative analysis where the researcher is moving in and out of the data collection and

analysis process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interview transcripts were examined to find codes and themes. In order to identify the codes in the data, open coding was used. Open coding involves examining the data line by line, coding first for similarities, then for differences. Themes were formed once three or more of the same code were identified in the data.

Protection of human subjects

There were minimal risks to participants. Before the interview, the participants were given a consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form discussed the steps that were taken to protect the participants from harm. The participants had the freedom to choose where their interview will be held, if they want to discontinue the interview, and to skip certain questions. The consent form was signed by I and the participant, and a copy of the consent for was provided to the participants for their record. The participants were de-identified, and their data was stored electronically on the researcher's computer, which is password protected.

FINDINGS

Sample

The sample for this study included seven LICSW social work leaders. 18 people were invited to participate. The interviews were conducted between February 12- March 26, 2015. Two of the participants had over 20 years of leadership experience, four participants had between five and ten years of leadership experience, and one participant had less than five years of experience. Six of the seven participants were leaders in health care settings. One participant was a leader in a mental health setting.

Themes

To better understand the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within a social service organization, the proposed research question was, “How is emotional intelligence defined from the viewpoint of Licensed Clinical Social workers, and how does it play a role in leading an organization in the context of social work?” The questions were constructed to bring out themes and considered the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The data was transcribed and coded. Ideas that were mentioned by at least four participants constituted themes. Quotes that resembled the themes have been included in italics. The themes are discussed in the following.

Mentoring is an important component to being an effective leader.

In the interview, I asked how transformational leadership was either used or not used in the organization. Two of the respondents stated how they felt it was their responsibility to mentor, grow and develop their employees. Respondent one stated:

So how I did that was by just the mentoring, I always saw my responsibility as a manager was to make my employees be the best that they could be, so I was pretty hands on, I met with them frequently to develop their professional identity and professional practice. I hired a lot of students and I supervised them until they got

their license, so it was sort of that progression of helping them grow into their own practice. It was how they saw it, and not everyone had to do things the same way. It was just that growing and developing of how they interacted with people and how they worked. (Respondent 1, p. 1, lines 5-12).

Respondent six stated:

I have always been a huge proponent in growing and developing my people...If you aren't growing and developing your people I don't think you are a very good leader... I think there's strategic succession planning here, so I think when they see people who have potential for continuing to be promoted and growing and developing as a leader they're working with those leaders intentionally because if I don't grow people in my own department, if I were to move up another level there would be no one to take my place. So I think if we really are serious about growing and developing people, we really need to look at people in our own department who could potentially take your place if you left so that all of those knowledge and skills are transferred in the right way. (Respondent 6, p. 1, lines 6, 16-26).

Another respondent noted how she learned a vast amount from having a great mentor and role model earlier on in her career. Respondent five stated:

I had a great mentor and great role model. I would say she was a transformational leader. I was able to work with her almost 15 years of my career. She was my mentor in my first leadership role. She was the director and I was the assistant director of social work at a major hospital. I learned a ton from that. (Respondent 5, p. 3, lines 100-104).

One respondent gave an example of how she mentors her employees. Respondent seven stated:

So the 2nd week I was here, One of the social workers that was on call, the pager went off at 5pm she was driving home, it was a really bad child abuse case in the ED, so she turned around and came back...It was very complex and with more than one child and she was brand new to doing the on call piece and she followed up with me on Monday and we talked through the case and it really impacted her because of the severity of the abuse and with more than one child and took an emotional tole on her so we spent a lot of time reflecting on that and talking through that. (Respondent 7, p. 1, lines 7-15).

Personality can impact transformational leadership behavior.

When asking the respondents what the contributing factors are to effective leadership behavior, five out of the seven respondents believed it can be learned and certain personality characteristics are also important. In addition, four of the respondents believed that leaders that are extraverted can be helpful in being effective leaders. Respondent one believed both, personality and being taught to be an effective leader are helpful. They particularly thought personality was essential.

They stated:

I don't necessarily think you can always be taught, some yes to some degree. But I think a lot of it is personality. Are you a people person, do you believe in people, do you believe it is your job to help your people be the best that they can be or are you just a dictator. I think sense of humor. I think a lot of those characteristics are really important. I think it's important to be organized and to be a really good communicator, but I think you have to be a person who can really relate to people. If your employees don't like you, they aren't going to work for you, they aren't going to go the extra mile for you... I also think you can learn certain

skills. You can learn to be a better communicator, you can learn to be more organized, I don't necessarily think you can change your innate personality...I think if you are an introvert I don't think you can learn to be an extravert, maybe a little bit. (Respondent 1, p. 3, lines 119-126, 145-152).

Four of the respondents believed that leaders that are extraverted have an advantage to being effective leaders. Respondent two noted:

I think it's both.. So personality, yea I would say Extraverts probably have it easier when it comes to being a leader. But I don't think all leadership requires that you be an extravert. I'm an introvert. Sometimes you can be the best leader by being a good listener or drawing out other people. I think there are pieces of personality where if you have an upbeat personality, if you're interested and can draw out other people, that's going to help... working with someone who is a transformational leader...We can provide that parallel process with what we're doing with the people we are supervising as well. (Respondent 2, p. 2, lines 86-91, 109-120).

Respondent three had a similar belief in thinking effective leadership comes from certain personality traits and it can be taught. They always mention extraversion being helpful, but that it may not be essential. They believed effective leadership came from being an attentive observer, having good insight, and good teamwork skills. Respondent three noted:

I think it can be learned, although I think there are personality characteristics that contribute to it, one of the ones the extraversion well partly I'm not an extravert, extraversion works well for some people. I don't know if it's essential, because some of the best leaders both managers and other people were just

attentive observers, had good insight, and good teamwork skills, and they weren't necessarily outgoing, but they were willing to speak up. (Respondent 3, p. 3, lines 101-106).

Respondent six also believed effective leadership can be learned and that leaders that are extraverted may have an edge. This respondent believed extraverted leaders are easier to trust because they are more transparent than leaders that are introverted. This respondent stated that leaders that are introverted may give off a perception to their staff that they are hiding something or are harder to read. Respondent six stated:

I would say parts of it can be learned but I certainly have run into people that because of their personality traits and because of who they are, it's not that they can't be good social workers but I can't really see them be effective leaders. I think there are things that are innate about leadership, there are things that come natural for some people, you're a natural leader in some way and extraversion is something, I mean there are certainly good leaders that are introverted. But what I think you might hear from staff...is you're always kinda thinking, I don't know what they're thinking, I don't know what their motivation was and they're hard to read. Which always lends to even if there is no ill intention on the part of the leader, it lends to people not trusting as much as they could. Or if you are extraverted and you are really transparent in your leadership style, people don't have to guess. (Respondent 6, p. 2, lines 66-77).

Respondent four also believed that an effective leader has certain personality traits and can be learned. This respondent agreed that having an extraverted leader may be more helpful, but also

added that introverted leaders are more introspective. The introverted leaders are more likely to assess and reflect on what changes need to be made. Respondent four stated:

I think there are quote on quote born leaders. People who have more traits that enable them to do that... Extroverts have it easier, would be my guess. The introvert has a different style and has more self introspection generally, which is good too. You kinda measure how did that go, what do I need to change. But I think the kinda getting out there is a little better. I think a lot of introverted type leaders are often times not seen as that dynamic because they aren't out there and telling people. Like I don't go around telling the system what a good job were doing, where somebody else does. (Respondent 4, p. 3, p. 91-92, 104-109).

Transformational leadership can be learned.

Five out of the seven respondents believed that effective leadership can be learned. Two of the respondents believed that leadership can be learned by having a strong mentor, one participant believed effective leadership by observing different leadership styles, one respondent believed you learn how to be an effective leader by learning what motivates and feels rewarding to employees, and one respondent believed that a leader can learn certain skills to be an effective leader. Respondent two noted the importance of learning how to be a good leader by having a strong leader that leads by example. Respondent two noted:

The person who was leading the training really lead by example by how they interacted with people and the care and concern they showed for each person in the room. I think that was transformational in itself. And so if we have those experiences of what it'd be like to be working with someone who is a transformational leader then we can provide that parallel process with what

we're doing with the people we are supervising as well. (Respondent 2, p. 3, 105-110).

Respondent five also believed having a great mentor was helpful. They also note that her mentor and she had very different personalities; her mentor being introverted and she being extraverted. She noted the importance of understanding mission, understanding social works' role, having passion for leading were the key components to being a strong leader, and to understand, motivate, and manage the need for change. Respondent five stated:

I would say I do think it can be learned... I had a great mentor and great role model. I would say she was a transformational leader. I was able to work with her almost 15 years of my career. She was my mentor in my first leadership role. She was the director and I was the assistant director of social work at a major hospital. I learned a ton from that. I think we also had very different personalities; our styles would have been really different. But I think those core pieces of understanding mission, understanding social works' role and having passion for leading are really key. I think, I'm very much an extrovert and she was very much an introvert, she had a very different leadership style, she was very quiet. I tend to be not so quiet. But I think it really was understand, motivate, and manage the need for change. I think that's what all leadership comes down to and that's really what social work comes down to as well. (Respondent 5, p. 3, lines 104-115).

Respondent seven believed leadership could be learned by observing different leadership styles.

Respondent seven stated:

What I try to do is observe different leadership styles, nobody does it the same. And I've seen very good leaders and inspiring and I've seen really poor leaders and I don't want to be that poor leader. I think it can be learned. A lot of it is trial and error. (Respondent 7, p. 3, lines 112-114, 124).

One respondent believed you can learn to be an effective leader by learning about your employees. Learning what motivates and feels rewarding to their employees helps a leader be more effective. Respondent four stated:

I think just knowing who you are dealing with and what they need is important, you might be great at doing one thing but that's not what the staff person will absorb or doesn't mean much to them. So if one person is inspired by getting a pat on the head and another person doesn't care, they would rather have more time to do something- that would be a better reward for them. So I think just knowing and being able to adapt that is good. There's extraverts and introverts in therapy as therapists, so again they're going to want different kinds of things. An introvert probably isn't going to want to be the center of attention and be held up but they will want something else. But you can learn, you can decide what is better for people, you can ask them. People sometimes know what they want.

(Respondent 4, p. 3, lines 80-89).

One respondent believed that a person can learn certain skills that can aid them into being a more effective leader. Respondent one stated:

I think you can learn certain skills. You can learn to be a better communicato, you can learn to be more organized.... There's a lot of management books on how to

have a difficult conversation. I think as a social worker, you learn those skills.
(Respondent 1, p. 4, lines 145-146, 149-151).

Emotional intelligence means tuning into staff.

When asking the leaders what emotional intelligence means to them, four respondents believed emotional intelligence means being aware and in tune with their staff's emotions. Respondent one stated that emotional intelligence is defined as:

I think emotional intelligence is being in touch with what's going on with you and also trying to interpret that from your staff so it's almost that intuition or just being really in tune I think. And again, social work you tune into, what am I feeling? and why am I feeling that what's going on here and being able to read the other person. So you adjust, if you are having a difficult conversation, you adjust how you are going to move forward with that based on what you are feeling and what the other person is feeling or even what the group is feeling. I think if you are oblivious to some of that stuff again I think that's a drawback as a leader. (Respondent 1, p. 156-164).

Respondent four had a similar definition; they noted:

To me, emotional intelligence would be being able to pick up on people's emotions and where they are at and how they're feeling or whether or not they are expressing that, or whether or not it matches, where they are putting on the smile where you can tell it's not a good day for them or something is bothering them. (Respondent 4, p. 3, lines 116-120).

Respondent two believed tuning in refers to being aware of one's own emotions as well as others in order to manage social situations. *"I would assume being aware of your own emotions and other's emotions as well and how to best manage those social situations."* (Respondent 2, p. 3, lines 127-129). Participant six believed emotional intelligence is being aware of one's surroundings and the morale of the department. They noted the importance of employees feeling supported, listened to, and understood. She believed that employees do not leave organizations, they leave leaders.

I think it's really being aware of your surroundings, it's really being aware of the morale in your department... There are things that are going to be happening in your department that if you just rely on what you see and what you know and not what you feel and what you can pick up around you. You are going to be missing a huge part of the picture... So engaging them in the process, getting feedback, having them contribute to departmental goals, and making sure that everyone is heard... People don't typically leave organizations, they typically leave leaders.

(Respondent 6, p. 2, lines 85-86, 90-92, 118-119).

Relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment.

Five respondents spoke about the importance of leaders having strong relationships with their employees. Each respondent added in a different perspective. One respondent stated that when employees like their leader they are more likely to go above and beyond and are more motivated to do their best. Two respondents stated that when a strong relationship is formed between leader and employee, the employee is more willing to hear feedback in a positive way. One respondent notes the importance of having a strong relationship with both coworkers and subordinates. One

respondent noted that work gets done more successfully when relationships are strong.

Respondent one noted the importance of a leader being liked by their employees. Employees are more likely to go above and beyond when they like their leaders. If the leader shows an interest in their employees it helps motivate employees to do their best.

If your employees don't like you, they aren't going to work for you, they aren't going to go the extra mile for you. If you like your employees and show interest in your employees other than just get your tasks down. You know, how are you? What's going on in your life? It's that sort of leadership I believe that really engages people and motivates people to want to be their best. (Respondent 1, p. 3, lines 125-129).

Respondent two noted that when a leader has a good relationship with their employee they are more willing to receive and hear feedback. Having a strong relationship also helps when the work gets stressful. Participant two stated:

When you're having a good relationship with an employee it's awesome! It's so great. When you're not having a good relationship with a supervisee it's much worse than what it would be like with a client. It's extreme because this person is a coworker you want to have this good relationship but yet you have to hold them to standards. That shared meaning vs. demand for work... when the relationship is better, they can hear the feedback better... It seems very obvious because people's relationships to their supervisors or coworkers, that's what keeps people going when the rest of the work is really stressful or when they need extra support.” (Respondent 2, p. 5, lines 191-196, 209-210, 214-216).

Respondent four noted the importance of employees feeling understood and comfortable around their leader. This respondent also agrees with respondent two in that an employee will take correction better when they're understood and have a relationship. Respondent four reported:

The more people feel understood, comfortable, and part of the organization the more committed they are and dedicated to their job and the organization. When you feel a part of something it's when you feel understood. You can take correction better when you're understood. They feel the connection with me because there is a relationship.

(Respondent 4, p. 4, lines 136-141).

Respondent three also noted the importance of forming strong relationships with coworkers and subordinates. Respondent three stated: “A lot of it was based on relationships, forming strong relationships with either people you are working side by side with or people you are supervising.” (Respondent 3, p. 1, lines 36-37). One respondent stated that the work gets done and is done successfully when relationships are strong. Respondent five noted:

Relationships are how the work gets done. I think in any complex system whether it be hospital, or health care, building those relationships are important. I think in almost any industry, everyone is trying to do more with less. It's not just about doing A, B,C,D; it's about having those relationships. So if I know someone in a different area and I call them up and I say hey, I'm looking to do this pilot, I want to partner with you. If they know me and we are able to build a relationship, it's more likely that that work is going to get done and is going to be successful. (Respondent 5, p. 3, lines 125-132).

DISCUSSION

Themes

Upon reviewing the themes from the interviews, new discoveries were revealed. The following is a discussion of the similarities and differences between the literature review and the themes from this study.

Mentoring is an important component to being an effective leader

The findings from this study are consistent with the findings from (Bass, 1997). Bass (1997) identified “idealized influence” (p. 133), as referring to leaders who act as strong role models for followers, take risks, are deeply trusted and respected, and show concern for their followers’ needs. In addition, Bass defined “individualized consideration behavior” (p. 133) as consisting of leaders who pay attention to follower’s needs and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Four of the seven respondents in this study reported that mentoring and professional development was an important factor in being a good leader.

Personality can impact transformational leadership behavior

This study showed similar and different results in comparison to the literature review. Two of the respondents reported being liked and trusted as an innate personality trait that a leader can possess that will aid them in being a good leader. This belief is similar to Judge and Bono (2000) who found that among the Big Five Personality traits, agreeableness emerged as the most consistent and strongest predictor of transformational leadership. In addition, agreeableness was strongly related to charisma (Judge & Bono, 2000). Being a charismatic leader is consistent with one of the respondents who believed being liked by employees is important in being a strong leader. In addition, research (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert & Mount 1998) also indicated that agreeableness is the most predictive of quality team interaction and performance. Four of the

respondents believed that leaders that are extraverted can be helpful in being effective leaders. This is consistent with the literature by Judge & Bono (2000) who suggest that extraversion emerged as a significant correlate of transformational leadership.

However, two of the participants reported being introverted can also be helpful in that they may be more introspective, excellent listeners, and can be attentive observers. The literature does not speak to introversion being a contributor to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership can be learned

Literature was scant in regards to the belief that becoming a transformational leadership can be learned. However, five out of the seven respondents in this study believed that effective leadership can be learned. Two of the respondents believed that leadership can be learned by having a strong mentor, one participant believed effective leadership by observing different leadership styles, one respondent believed you learn how to be an effective leader by learning what motivates and feels rewarding to employees, and one respondent believed that a leader can learn certain skills to be an effective leader. All five of the respondents never mentioned leadership training as advantageous to becoming a good leader. However, in the literature review, research (Barling, Weber, And Kelloway, 1996) suggested that transformational leadership behavior can be learned. Furthermore, Barling, Weber and Kelloway (1996) found that subordinates of managers that received transformational leadership training perceived their managers higher on intellectual stimulation, charisma, and individual consideration than subordinates of managers that did not receive transformational leadership training. None of the respondents in this study reported subordinates perceiving them in a higher regard because they attended leadership training.

Emotional intelligence means tuning into staff

The findings of this study were consistent with the literature in regards to the importance of leaders to tune into the emotions of their staff. When asking the leaders what emotional intelligence means to them, four respondents believed emotional intelligence means being aware and in tune with their staff's emotions. Two of the respondents reported that a leader could be missing important information if they are not tuned into their staff and the morale of the department. The literature was consistent with these findings; George (2000) argued that the ability of a leader to recognize his own or his followers' emotions or moods plays an important role in the process of leadership. In addition, Goleman (1995) suggested that the best predictor of who eventually emerges as a leader is based on emotional intelligence (EI). Since transformational leaders understand how others feel, they are able to meet the emotional needs of each employee and show empathy to followers (Bass, 1990). One respondent in this study noted that employees do not leave organizations; they leave leaders when referring to the importance of emotional intelligence and effective leadership. Furthermore, Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Daus (2002) argued that the components of emotional intelligence are highly consistent with transformational leadership behavior.

Relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment

Five respondents in this study spoke about the importance of leaders having strong relationships with their employees. Each respondent added in a different perspective. The research in the literature review had some similarities but the respondents of this study certainly had new perspectives. One respondent stated that when employees like their leader they are more likely to go above and beyond and are more motivated to do their best. This is partially similar to

the research done by Carney and Harrigan (2003) who suggested that the accurate recognition of the emotions of others is critical to a leader's capability to inspire and build relationships. If a leader can recognize the emotions and needs of their employees, they are more likely to inspire and build relationships with them where an employee may go above and beyond. Two respondents brought new information to light that was not in the previous literature. They stated that when a strong relationship is formed between leader and employee, the employee is more willing to hear feedback in a positive way. One respondent notes the importance of having a strong relationship with both coworkers and subordinates. This is consistent with a study conducted by Li and Hung (2009) which explained how employees experienced and perceived their leaders' transformational behavior, as influencing the quality of leader-member relationships (LMR) and coworker relationships (CWR). The results indicated, "Transformational leaders increase the likelihood of enhancing followers' task performance and of followers engaging in OCB through the formation of leader-member and coworker relationships" (pp. 1137-1138). Another respondent reported a new perspective that was not previously reported in prior research. This respondent noted that work gets done more successfully when relationships are strong.

Strengths and Limitations

Contributing to research on effective leadership and emotional intelligence from the perspectives of clinical social work leaders is strength of this research project. Until now, there have not been any studies looking at emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in the field of social work. This research found the importance of mentoring, forming strong relationships with staff, and tuning into staff as importance contributors to being a transformational and effective leader. This study also contributed to the body of previous

research suggesting that having innate personality characteristics and learning how to be a transformational leader are important factors in being an effective leader. This research can hopefully aid other organizations and leaders of organizations on the importance of emotional intelligence from leadership that can impact employee organizational commitment.

A limitation of this study was the small sample size of seven participants. In addition, the findings may be difficult to generalize to all social work leaders within the field of social work. Six out of the seven respondents were within medical social work in hospital settings within the field of social work. Potentially different data could come from social work leaders from different areas of social work. A recommendation for future research would be to interview a larger sample size of social work leaders within various settings of social work; mental health clinics, county case management, rehabilitation facilities, and non-profit organizations.

Another limitation in this study was that the themes were only coded by the researcher. The researcher certainly has their own bias in how they chose to pull out and phrase the themes. If other people coded the data, the themes may have been phrased a different way. In addition, if more people coded the data, the results would have been more reliable.

Suggestions for future research

This research sample consisted of medical social work leaders; it would be interesting to see how social work leaders in different settings would respond to these same questions. Further research could broaden important questions about effective leadership during organizational changes. Research could look into the important tactics in keeping an organization together during difficult rule changes. For instance, when certain rules get changed, the research could explore how effective leaders keep their team together and motivated. Another related

question could explore how effective leaders in social service organizations keep morale high when turnover is increased.

Since many of the respondents reported that effective leadership can be learned, future research could also look at the effects of leadership training. This research could ask employees if their leader made positive changes after attending the training. Some of these changes could include; feeling more supported, understood, and informed. The research could look at how committed employees feel to the organization after the leader received leadership training and made the recommended changes.

Implications for social work

The data showed how transformational and effective leadership can be learned. It would be helpful for social workers within organizations to know the components to a strong leader especially if they aspire to be leaders themselves someday. It would be helpful for them to recognize that strong leadership can be attained by having excellent role models, mentors, and skills in attentive listening, communication, and interpersonal skills. It would also be helpful for social workers to remember that the importance of the relationship with the client also applies with their leader of their organization. Five out of the seven respondents reported how important it is for leaders to have strong relationships with their employees. They mentioned how tuning in and having a good relationship with their employees impacts their employees' organizational commitment. Having more leadership awareness on the importance on building individual relationships with their employees would be beneficial.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to better understand the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership within a social service organization. Studies on transformational leadership and emotional intelligence exist, but do not in the field of social work. This study addressed a gap in the literature looking at LICSW social work leaders' perception and understanding of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership.

The study had several themes emerge. These themes included; mentoring is an important component to effective leadership, personality can impact transformational leadership behavior, transformational leadership can be learned, emotional intelligence means tuning into staff, and relationships are an important factor in effective leadership and organizational commitment. Seven respondents described their perspectives based on a micro, mezzo, and macro level of experiences and influences.

This study highlighted the importance of having strong leadership within the field of social work which can be applied to any organization. The leaders reported how important it is to tune into staff and the morale of the department. Building strong relationships with employees can drastically impact the employees level of organizational commitment. Respondent six said it best, *"People don't typically leave organizations, they typically leave leaders.* (Respondent 6, p. 2, lines 118-119).

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Transformational leadership occurs when individuals engage with each other in such a way that the leader and follower raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. How is transformational leadership either used or not used within this specific social service organization?
2. Transactional leadership occurs when a leader exchanges something of economic, political, or psychological value with a follower; these exchanges are based on the leader identifying performance requirements and clarifying the conditions under which rewards are available for meeting these requirements. The goal is to enter into a mutually beneficial exchange, but not necessarily to develop an enduring relationship. How is transactional leadership either used or not used within this social service organization?
3. How do the rules and regulations of the social service organization impact leadership behavior and does it give you flexibility to be transactional and transformational in your leadership style?
4. There is research suggesting that certain personality characteristics, such as agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience predict transformational leadership and research suggesting that transformational leadership behavior can be learned. From your experience, what do you believe are to be helpful contributors to effective leadership behavior?
5. What does emotional intelligence mean to you, and how do you think emotional intelligence impacts your leadership style?
6. How would you assess your own level of emotional intelligence, and how has it impacted your employees' level of organizational commitment?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Effective Leadership: Exploring the Perspectives of
Licensed Clinical Social Worker Leaders

IRB Tracking Number: 691395-1

I am conducting a study about the impact of emotional intelligence on effective leadership in social work leadership positions. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a LICSW in a leadership role in a social service organization. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Shannon Perry, a MSW student at the University of St. Thomas. The faculty advisor in this study is Dr. Rosella Collins-Puoch, a research chair at the University of St. Thomas.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore LICSW leaders' perspectives on the impact of emotional intelligence on effective leadership in social service organizations. This study will be qualitative with questions pertaining to types of leadership the social workers use within their organization, their perspective on certain personality characteristics impacting effective leadership, and their belief on the importance of leadership training. In addition, the questions will address their thoughts on the meaning of emotional intelligence and its impact on their leadership style and their subordinates' organizational commitment. Lastly, the interview will address their beliefs about emotional intelligence and its impact on effective leadership within social service organizations.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Participate in one interview that will last between 45 and 60 minutes that will be conducted at a location of your choice. Data will be collected through verbal responses to the qualitative interview questions that will be recorded and transcribed on the researcher's computer.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. Discussing experiences as a leader and whether emotional intelligence has impacted their subordinates' level of organizational commitment may be uncomfortable if those experiences have been negative. Reflecting on the your level of emotional

intelligence may be uncomfortable if difficult situations arise during self reflection and assessment or your leadership experiences have been negative. You may skip any question at anytime during the interview. There will be an opportunity to process your thoughts and feelings after the interview. You may voluntarily withdraw from this study at anytime without the use of your data and without affecting your relationship with the researcher and the University of St. Thomas.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify participants in any way. The recorded interview, electronic transcript, and field notes will be unidentifiable and kept on my password-protected computer. The computer will be kept at home. The consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home in which only I will have access. My committee chair, committee, and I will have access to the data while I am working on this project. The data will be kept until May 18, 2015 and then will be destroyed. I will retain the consent forms for at least three years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to skip any questions I may ask. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with this researcher, the University of St. Thomas, or your place of employment. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw until April 15, 2015. Should you decide to withdraw from this study; data collected about you will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw for the study you may contact me, Shannon Perry at 651-303-7355 or at perr8491@stthomas.edu and let me know that you would no longer wish to participate.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, Shannon Perry at 651-303-7355 or perr8491@stthomas.edu. You may ask any questions you have now or if you have questions later, you may contact my chair, Rosella Collins-Puoch at 612-669-9202. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6038 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I am at least 18 years of age. I have read the above information and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I provide my consent to participate in the study, which includes

having my interview recorded and transcribed. Even after I sign this consent form, I am aware that I can withdraw from this study by April 15, 2015.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date